



Department of Energy
Washington, D.C. 20545

402874

January 22, 1980

Mrs. Ruth G. Van Cleve
Director
Office of Territorial Affairs
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mrs. Van Cleve:

Last May at a meeting in Washington, D.C., Mr. Anton DeBrum presented to the U.S. Government claims that the people of Likiep Atoll were experiencing a higher than normal incidence of thyroid disease. At that time, he requested that the U.S. Department of Interior and the U.S. Department of Energy investigate this matter. Both departments responded positively to Mr. DeBrum's request.

The Department of Interior periodically has made reference to this matter in correspondence with President Kabua and other officials of the Marshall Islands. At present, I am pleased to inform you that contract negotiations between Brookhaven National Laboratory and Tabershaw Occupational Medicine Associates, P.A., (TOMA) of Rockville, Maryland, have been concluded, and that we are prepared to proceed with the first phase of this inquiry.

The first phase would be completed in two parts. The first part would involve examination of available hospital and medical records at various locations: possibly Honolulu, Majuro, Kwajalein, Guam and, perhaps, elsewhere. The second part of this phase would consist of a visit by TOMA personnel to Likiep in order to interview the population as appropriate. This phase would help to more clearly determine and characterize the magnitude and extent of the issues raised by Mr. DeBrum.

If warranted by the information obtained during the first phase, the second phase will be initiated, in which a medical team subsequently will be sent to Likiep for an examination of the relevant population.

Prior to any on-site investigations in the Pacific, however, we feel that it is imperative that representatives of the Government of the Marshall Islands, of the United States Government, and of TOMA be in complete agreement as to the content of, and methodology to be employed during, the first phase of the program. In addition, it is just as important for all interested parties to clearly understand what will not be accomplished during this phase.

Therefore, we respectfully suggest that one or more representatives of the Government of the Marshall Islands come to Washington in order to meet and discuss these matters with the staff members of TOMA who will be participating in the study. We feel that a mutual understanding and agreement on the aims and objectives of this phase, and a mutual awareness of the objectivity and capability of TOMA, will do much to ensure that the project is carried to a mutually acceptable conclusion through objectives which are agreed to by all concerned.

Once agreement is reached, TOMA is prepared to move immediately to the first part of this phase.

Whenever that occurs, I would hope, if time commitments and circumstances permit, to accompany the TOMA representative during at least a part of his visit to the Marshall Islands. If possible, at that time, I would consider it an honor and a pleasure to meet President Kabua and other members of his government. I shall look forward to that potential opportunity.

We trust that this approach is acceptable to both the Department of Interior and to the Government of the Marshall Islands, and we shall look forward to hearing from you regarding this matter. Please call me if any points need clarification.

Sincerely,

Bruce W. Wachholz, Ph.D.
Office of Health and
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